

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction.....	iv
Delegated Employment Officer (DEO) Program Guidelines	v
Delegated Employment Officers (DEOs) List	vi
Section 1 - Excepted Service	1-1
1.1. Regulations.	1-1
1.2. Process.....	1-1
1.3. Excepted Schedules.....	1-1
1.4. Publication of Appointing Authorities.....	1-1
1.5. Legal Authority.....	1-1
Section 2 - Letter of Authorization (L/A)	2-1
2.1. Legal Authority.....	2-1
2.2. Positions Covered.....	2-1
2.3. Schedules Permitted.	2-2
2.4. Time Limitations.....	2-2
2.5. Counting Work Days.....	2-2
2.6. T&A.....	2-2
2.7. Benefits.....	2-3
Section 3 - Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP).....	3-1
3.1. Legal Authority.....	3-1
3.2. Positions Covered.....	3-1
3.3. Schedules Permitted.	3-1
3.4. Time Limitations.....	3-1
3.5. Benefits.....	3-1
Section 4 - Quick Reference of Similarities/Differences Between L/A and STEP	4-1
Section 5 - Pre-Recruitment for L/A and STEP	5-1
5.1. What Is Needed?	5-1
5.2. Request for Personnel Action (SF-52).....	5-1
5.3. Complete Position Description.	5-1
Section 6 - Recruitment	6-1
6.1. Locating Applicants.....	6-1
6.2. Vacancy Announcement (Optional).....	6-1
Section 7 - Receipt and Review of Applications	7-1
7.1 What Must Be Done?.....	7-1
7.2. Eligibility Requirements.....	7-1
7.3. Qualification Requirements	7-3
7.4. Veterans' Preference.....	7-7
7.5. Applicant Notification.	7-8
Section 8 - Referral and Selection.	8-1
8.1. Order of Consideration.	8-1
8.2. Selection Process.	8-1
8.3. Applicant Notification.	8-1
Section 9 - Required Documentation.....	9-1
9.1. L/A and STEP Documentation Checklist.	9-1
9.2. Request for Personnel Action (SF-52).....	9-1
9.3. Application.	9-1

9.4.	Position Description with Signed Cover Sheet (AD-332)	9-1
9.5.	Declaration for Federal Employment (OF-306)	9-1
9.6.	Appointment Affidavit (SF-61)	9-2
9.7.	Employee Eligibility Verification (I-9)	9-2
9.8.	Race and National Origin Identification (SF-181)	9-2
9.9.	Self Identification of Medical Disability (SF-256)	9-2
9.10.	Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate (W-4)	9-2
9.11.	Federal, State and Local Tax Forms	9-2
9.12.	Employee Address (AD-349)	9-2
9.13.	Direct Deposit (SF-1199A) OR Fast Start Direct Deposit (Form 2231)	9-2
9.14.	Work Permit	9-2
9.15.	Designation of Beneficiary (SF-1152)	9-2
9.16.	Conditions of Employment for Letter of Authorization (L/A) Appointments OR Statement of Understanding Student Temporary Employment Program	9-3
9.17.	Proof of Student Enrollment (STEP Only)	9-3
9.18.	Proof of Education	9-3
9.19.	Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty (DD-214)	9-3
9.20.	Application for 10-Point Veteran's Preference (SF-15)	9-3
9.21.	Certification of Typing Proficiency	9-3
9.22.	NACI Paperwork	9-3
	Section 10 - Instructions for Completing a Request for Personnel Action (SF-52) for L/A and STEP Appointments	10-1

[Appendix A - 5 CFR Section 213 Excepted Service](#)

Appendix B - OPM Qualification Standards

[General Table of Contents](#)

[Clerical and Administrative Support Positions](#)

[Technical and Medical Support Positions](#)

[Administrative and Management Positions](#)

[Professional and Scientific Positions](#)

[GS-404: Biological Science Technician Series](#)

[GS-802: Engineering Technician Series](#)

[GS-1311: Physical Science Technician Series](#)

[GS-1316: Hydrologic Technician Series](#)

[Appendix C - Instructions for Completing Position Description Cover Sheet \(AD-332\)](#)

[Appendix D - Sample L/A Vacancy Announcement](#) [MS Word](#)

[Appendix E - Sample STEP Vacancy Announcement](#) [MS Word](#)

Appendix F - (Page Left Blank Intentionally)

[Appendix G - Accredited Educational Institutions](#)

[Appendix H - Formulas Converting Semester to Quarter-Hours and Quarter to Semester-Hours](#)

[Appendix I - Table for Equivalents for Converting Semester to Quarter-Hours and Quarter to Semester Hours and Formula](#)

[Appendix J - Formula for Crediting Part-time Work](#)

[Appendix K - Formula for Crediting a Combination of Experience and Education](#)

[Appendix L - Veterans' Preference Chart](#)

[Appendix M -Sample Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty \(DD-214\)](#)

[Appendix N - L/A and STEP Documentation Checklist](#)

[Appendix O - Sample L/A Appointment SF-52](#)

[Appendix P - Sample STEP Appointment SF-52](#)

[Appendix Q - Conditions of Employment for Letter of Authorization \(L/A\) Appointments](#) [MS Word](#)

[Appendix R - Statement of Understanding Student Temporary Employment Program](#) [MS WORD](#)

[Appendix S - Sample Proof of Student Enrollment \(STEP Only\)](#)

[Appendix T - Sample Transcripts](#)

Appendix U - (Page Left Blank Intentionally)

[Appendix V - Bargaining Unit Codes](#)

[Appendix W -Sample Work Permit](#)

[Appendix X - ARS Q&A's](#) **And** [OPM Q&A's](#)

Introduction

This handbook is for Delegated Employment Officers (DEO) – those who have attended training and have been notified in writing that they are delegated the appointing authority to approve initial appointments for designated positions known as Letter of Authorization (L/A) and Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP). The delegated authority only includes positions in the general schedule (GS) and **does not** include the hiring of Wage Grade (WG) positions, non-U.S. citizens, nor any other type of personnel actions such as conversions. This authority has been delegated to assist field locations in expediting the hiring process for general schedule L/A and STEP positions.

This authority should be taken seriously since it transfers to the DEO the responsibility of making sure actions are processed in compliance with applicable statutory and regulatory requirements. If a person is appointed to a position for which they are not eligible or do not qualify, the employee may have to be released without pay or downgraded. Therefore, the Human Resources Division (HRD) will continually monitor actions to ensure they are in compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements. Misuse of the L/A or STEP authority by the DEO will result in their authority being withdrawn. HRD will also ensure that required information/data is processed to the National Finance Center.

This handbook is designed to provide assistance to DEO's in effecting temporary general schedule appointments under the L/A and STEP authorities. It is very important, however, that each DEO work with their servicing specialist who can answer questions and provide guidance on processing specific actions. Please provide any comments or suggestions regarding the contents of this handbook to the REE Employment Officer on 301-504-1398 or the REE Student Program Manager on 301-504-1397.

Delegated Employment Officer (DEO) Program Guidelines

Recommendation Process	Recommendations should be in writing, via memorandum or email, from the Area Director, thru the servicing HRD Branch Chief, to the Employment Officer. Request should clearly state who is being nominated for this authority, the specific location they will service, and any circumstances surrounding the request (i.e., the previous DEO, Ms. Smith, retired).
Formal Training Requirements	<p>1) USDA Graduate School self-study course, “Qualification Standards for GS Positions” (ID# STAF7051N). Details as to how to enroll, cost, etc., can be found at www.grad.usda.gov. This training introduces the Operating Manual, Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions, explains how the manual is organized and how to apply it to make basic qualification determinations.</p> <p>2) HRD sponsored LA/STEP DEO training. This training reviews the laws and regulations governing LA/STEP appointing authorities; pre-recruitment and recruitment requirements; eligibility and minimum qualification requirements; forms required for appointments; and gives instruction on how to complete an SF-52 and the documentation required.</p>
Provisional Period	Once training is completed, the DEO will work closely with their servicing specialist for the first year to ensure they thoroughly know and understand the laws and regulations relating to LA/STEP authority.
Letter of Authority	Letters will be issued to all DEOs conferring authority to sign LA/STEP personnel actions. Only those that have been issued a letter have this authority.
HRD Involvement	HRD will ensure that required information/data is processed to the National Finance Center. HRD will provide oversight and periodically audit actions for quality control. HRD reserves the right to withdraw this authority at any time due to misuse, consistent errors, etc.

Delegated Employment Officers (DEOs) List

The following individuals have been designated to have signature authority for LA and STEP appointments as indicated for their respective locations. Those in **italics bold** need to complete required training before being granted the authority.

Delegated Employment Officers	Locations
North Atlantic Area	
Susan Bartley	Orono, ME
Maryanne Cage	Kearneysville, WV
Dianne Emerson	Frederick, MD
Jan Hanover	Plum Island Animal Disease Center, NY
Sharon Maio	Ithaca, NY
<i>Vacant</i>	Plum Island Animal Disease Center, NY
Cynthia McCollum	Wyndmoor, PA
Barbara Schneider	Newark, DE
Pat Shannon	University of Maryland - Eastern Shore, MD
Michael Canady (Provisional)	Beaver, WV
<i>Donita Gibboney (pending training)</i>	University Park, PA
Midwest Area	
Debbie Agee	Peoria, IL and Midwest Area
Richard Bergolc	Columbus, Coshocton, Wooster, OH
Barbara Donsbach	Urbana, IL
JoAnne Fernandez-Kniptash	Columbia, MO
Cindy Glasscock	East Lansing, MI
Pam Groth	Morris, St. Paul, MN
Mike Horn	NACAUR/Peoria, IL
Janae Lentz	Ames, IA
Carol Moran	Ames, IA
Jan Overton	West Lafayette, IN
Dianne Strub	Peoria, IL and Midwest Area
Jean Weinbrenner	Madison, WI
Northern Plains Area	
Glen Becker	Clay Center, NE
Jan Jones	Fort Collins, CO
Lisa Mullenax	Lincoln, NE
Bruce Rittel	Mandan, ND

Pacific West Area	
<i>Kathleen Dunaway (pending training)</i> Clarine Buck Linda Baugh Janis Contento (Provisional) Kathy Burrup Jimmie Nell Oliver Denice Chambers <i>Gwyn Watson (pending training)</i> Rhonda Day <i>Laura Davis-Coontz (pending training)</i> Pamela Dean Marietta Hauser Judy Pepperdine (Provisional) Margo Hess Elizabeth Langdon <i>Myles Taniguchi (pending training)</i> Sharon Weller <i>Eiko Adkisson (pending training)</i> Patricia Williams <i>Kaleen Lions (pending training)</i> Carolyn Yager	Burns, OR Tucson, AZ Pendleton, OR Fairbanks, AL Aberdeen, ID Salinas, CA Parlier and Shafter, CA Albany, CA Albany, CA; Reno, NV Pullman, WA Corvallis, OR Boise, ID Kimberly, ID Riverside, CA Davis, CA Hilo, Hawaiian Islands Dubois, ID Phoenix, AZ Wenatchee, WA Prosser, WA Yakima, WA
Mid South Area	
Gail Champagne Margaret Cook Susan Herrin Rita Keeling Sue Gore Cynthia Poynor Betty Shepherd Pat Winston Sarah Dotson (Provisional) <i>Anita Justice (pending training)</i>	Baton Rouge, LA Mississippi State, MS Poplarville, MS Stoneville, MS Stoneville, MS Oxford, MS Auburn, AL New Orleans, LA Lexington, KY Bowling Green, KY

Southern Plains Area	
Carolyn Bevers	Lane, OK
Wilma Black	Booneville, AR
Janice Brown	Temple, TX
Glenda Yarbrough	Lubbock, TX
JoAnn Fernandez	Las Cruces, NM
Eilene Gibbens	El Reno, OK
Mari Gomez	Weslaco, TX
Rhonda Korger	College Station, TX
Lynnette Lott	Bushland, TX
Shari Buhler (Provisional)	Beaumont, TX
Perry Rainosek (Provisional)	Houston, TX
Shiela Steadman	Woodward, OK
Edna Taylor	College Station, TX
Diana Wehr	Stillwater, OK
Jeanie Gwathney (Provisional)	Stuttgart, AR
Larry Altman (<i>pending training</i>)	Fayetteville, AR
Angie Heimann (Provisional)	Kerrville, TX
South Atlantic Area	
Susan Davis	Raleigh, NC
Steve Edney	Athens, GA
Ann Flanders	Athens, GA
Irene Fortson	Athens, GA
Judy Hendrix (Provisional)	Griffin, GA
Sue Hammontree	Charleston, SC
Esther Mae (Provisional)	Canal Point, FL
Mary Martinez (Provisional)	Ft. Pierce, FL
Deborah Padgett	Tifton, GA
Genell Powers	Athens, GA
Jacquelyn Sullivan	Gainesville, FL
Candace Wilson	Miami, FL

Section 1 - Excepted Service

- 1.1. **Regulations.** Regulations governing the excepted service are found in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) at 5 CFR 213 Subpart A (see Appendix A). It is important that DEO's read and understand these regulations before approving actions since both L/A and STEP are excepted service hiring authorities.
- 1.2. **Process.** Positions in the excepted service are exempt from following certain competitive procedure requirements of the competitive service (e.g., vacancy announcement, rating and ranking, etc.). Veterans' preference, however, does apply as explained later in Sections 7.4. and 8.1. All selections must be made without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status.
- 1.3. **Excepted Schedules.** The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) decides whether the duties and requirements of any particular position justify exception from the competitive service. OPM authorizes positions to be filled by excepted appointments under Schedule A, B, and C. A specific description of each of these schedules can be found at 5 CFR 213 Subpart C (see Appendix A).
- 1.4. **Publication of Appointing Authorities.** Schedule A, B, and C appointing authorities available for use by all agencies (e.g., STEP) are published in the CFR. Those appointing authorities that are for use by a single agency, such as the L/A which can only be used by the Department of Agriculture, are published annually as a Federal Register Notice.
- 1.5. **Legal Authority.** The legal authority for an excepted service appointment is the appropriate Schedule (A, B, or C) followed by the specific cite from the CFR or Federal Register Notice which gives the agency the authority to make that appointment (e.g., Schedule A 213.3113(a)(5)).

Section 2 - Letter of Authorization (L/A)

- 2.1. Legal Authority.** The L/A authority is an agency specific excepted service hiring authority, therefore, it is not found in the CFR but is published each year as a Federal Register Notice. The L/A legal authority is Schedule A 213.3113(a)(5) which states in part, "Temporary, intermittent, or seasonal employment in the field service of the Department in positions at or below GS-7 and WG-10 in the following types of positions: Field assistants for subprofessional services; ... agricultural helpers, helper-leaders, and workers in the Agricultural Research Service ..."
- 2.2. Positions Covered.** The LA authority covers field assistant type positions only. It **does not** include support positions such as office automation clerk/assistant, secretary, trades, crafts or manual labor positions. The following is a list of series, grade and title of positions for which the use of L/A authority would be appropriate:

GS-400	Biological Sciences Group
404-01	Biological Science Aid
404-02	Biological Science Aid
404-03	Biological Science Aid
404-04	Biological Science Laboratory Technician, Agricultural Science Research Technician, Biological Science Technician
404-05	Biological Science Laboratory Technician, Agricultural Science Research Technician, Biological Science Technician
404-06	Biological Science Laboratory Technician, Agricultural Science Research Technician, Biological Science Technician
404-07	Biological Science Laboratory Technician, Agricultural Science Research Technician, Biological Science Technician
GS-800	Engineering and Architecture Group
802-01	Engineering Aid
802-02	Engineering Aid
802-03	Engineering Aid
802-04	Engineering Technician
802-05	Engineering Technician
802-06	Engineering Technician
802-07	Engineering Technician
GS-1300	Physical Sciences Group
1311-01	Physical Science Aid
1311-02	Physical Science Aid
1311-03	Physical Science Aid
1311-04	Physical Science Aid
1311-05	Physical Science Technician

1311-06	Physical Science Technician
1311-07	Physical Science Technician
1316-01	Hydrologic Aid
1316-02	Hydrologic Aid
1316-03	Hydrologic Aid
1316-04	Hydrologic Technician
1316-05	Hydrologic Technician
1316-06	Hydrologic Technician
1316-07	Hydrologic Technician

WG Positions (Note: Only servicing specialists have authority to approve WG positions)

3511-01/04	Laboratory Worker
5002-04	Farmer
5031-03/05	Insects Production Worker
5048-04/05	Animal Caretaker
5705-05/07	Tractor Operator

- 2.3. Schedules Permitted.** Full-time, Part-time, Intermittent (positions in which work recurs at sporadic or irregular intervals so that an employee's tour of duty cannot be scheduled in advance of the administrative workweek).
- 2.4. Time Limitations.** Appointments made for 130 work days or less in a service year can be filled year after year. Appointments made for 131 - 180 work days in a service year can only be filled for two consecutive service years. **Regardless of the number of extensions or appointments, the total employment may not exceed 180 working days in a service year.**
- 2.5. Counting Work Days.** A service year begins with the employee's initial appointment and continues for one year. If the employee works or is in a paid status (e.g., holiday, annual/sick leave, credit hours, etc.) for any part of a day, even if only for one hour, that day is counted.
- 2.6. T&A.** Follow the instructions below when completing T&A's for employees with number of days worked limitations (L/A). Contact the Pay and Leave staff in the Policy Branch, Human Resources Division, on 301-504-4426/1468 if you have any questions or concerns.
- In the STAR Employee Detail Screen put a check in the, "Day Limitation" block.
 - Prepare the T&A as normal except enter a two-digit number equal to the number of days the employee was in a pay status during the pay period on the T&A, "Header" screen. Possible entries are "01" through "14."

- Count as one day in pay status any day for which pay is received, regardless of the number of hours worked (see 2.5. above).

In the remarks sections of the T&A, show the total number of days the employee has worked under the current appointment. Extreme care must be exercised to assure employees do not exceed their appointment limitations.

2.7. Benefits. *L/A employees ...

- on intermittent work schedules are not entitled to annual or sick leave.
- on appointments for 90 calendar days or more are entitled to annual and sick leave if they are on a regular tour of duty (i.e., part-time or full-time).
- on appointments for less than 90 calendar days are only entitled to sick leave if they are on a regular tour of duty (i.e., part-time or full-time); however, keep in mind, if the original appointment is extended beyond 90 calendar days without a break in service, the employee will be entitled to annual leave retroactive to their original appointment date.
- may earn credit and/or compensatory time at the discretion of the supervisor and in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.
- are not entitled to other benefits (e.g., TSP) except tort claims and injury compensation claims.

*NOTE: If the appointee was previously covered by benefits without a break in service of 3 days or less, consult your servicing specialist.

Section 3 - Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP)

- 3.1. Legal Authority.** The STEP authority is available for use by all agencies and is therefore found in the CFR at 213 Subpart C Section 3202. The STEP legal authority is Schedule B 213.3202(a) which is found at Appendix A, Section 213.3202(a). DEO's must thoroughly read and understand these regulations before making STEP appointments.
- 3.2. Positions Covered.** STEP appointments may be made to any position at any grade for which the student qualifies including clerical, administrative, technical, professional, and wage grade. The position does not have to be related to the student's field of study. STEP appointees are placed in a regular GS/WG classification series (such as GS-404, Biological Science Technician). Note: Only servicing specialists have authority to approve WG positions, so contact your servicing specialist if you need to fill a WG position.
- 3.3. Schedules Permitted.** STEP appointments may work full-time or part-time schedules at anytime during the year. There are no limitations on the number of hours a student can work per week, but the student's work schedule should not interfere with the student's academic schedule. OPM Student Q&A's at Appendix X which says, "an intermittent schedule is only appropriate when the nature of the work is so sporadic and unpredictable that a regular scheduled tour of duty cannot be scheduled in advance. It is not the intent of the Student Educational Employment Program to have students working in these types of positions. Students can work full or part time schedules, as best meets their needs and the needs of the agency." Additionally, be mindful that students on intermittent schedules do not earn annual and sick leave; however, if they are working a regular tour of duty they are entitled to leave and if challenged the agency could have to compensate the student accordingly.
- 3.4. Time Limitations.** STEP appointments are given temporary appointments not-to-exceed one year or less. Appointments may be extended in 1-year increments as long as the individual continues to meet the eligibility requirements. There is no restriction on the number of times this authority may be used to fill a position, the number of times a student may be appointed, or the number of days or hours worked in a year.
- 3.5. Benefits.** *Students ...
- on appointments for 90 calendar days or more are entitled to annual and sick leave if they are on a regular tour of duty (i.e., part-time or full-time).
 - on appointments for less than 90 calendar days are only entitled to sick leave if they are on a regular tour of duty (i.e., part-time or full-time); however, keep in mind, if the original appointment is extended beyond 90 calendar days without a break in service, the employee will be entitled to annual leave retroactive to their original appointment date.

- on a rare intermittent schedule are not entitled to annual or sick leave.
- may earn credit and/or compensatory time at the discretion of their supervisory and in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.
- are eligible for health insurance at the full cost (no government contribution) after completing one year of service.
- are not entitled to other benefits (e.g., TSP) except tort claims and injury compensation claims.

*NOTE: If the appointee was previously covered by benefits without a break in service of 3 days or less, consult your servicing specialist.

Section 4 - Quick Reference of Similarities/Differences Between L/A and STEP

Similarities	L/A and STEP
Qualifications	OPM Qualification Standards for GS Positions
Age	16-year minimum age and subject to all Federal, State, and local laws
Citizenship	Must be a U.S. Citizen or a Citizen of a country in alliance with U.S. (Note: only HR specialists have authority to hire non-U.S. citizens)
Employment of Relatives	Yes, if not working in direct supervisory chain
Suitability	Applies
Veteran Preference	Applies
Vacancy Announcement	Optional
Signed Statement of Understanding	Yes, a Conditions of Employment for Letter of Authorizations (L/A) Appointments must be signed for L/A and a Statement of Understanding Student Temporary Employment Program for STEP

Differences	L/A	STEP
Appointing Authority	Schedule A 213.3113(a) (5)	Schedule B 213.3202(a)
Position Number	Begins with 7	Begins with 0
Appointment Time Limitation	Not to exceed 130 or 180 working days in a service year	Not to exceed one year or date of graduation
Types of Positions Covered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Temporary, Seasonal, or Intermittent at or below GS-7 and WG-10 (consult your servicing specialist for WG positions) - Only for field assistants, not clerical, crafts, trades, or manual labor positions 	All series and grades (consult your servicing specialist for WG positions)
Proof of Student Enrollment	Not required	Yes, required

Section 5 - Pre-Recruitment for L/A and STEP

- 5.1. **What Is Needed?** For both L/A and STEP, the DEO will need a Request for Personnel Action (SF-52) and a complete Position Description with a signed Position Description Cover Sheet (AD-332).
- 5.2. **Request for Personnel Action (SF-52).** The requesting office prepares a Request for Personnel Action (SF-52) by completing Part A., Blocks 1-6 and Part B., Blocks 15 - 19, 21, 22, 32, 33 and 39 and submits it to the DEO to indicate they have a position to be filled. A requesting office may consult with the DEO in deciding which authority is appropriate. The DEO is responsible for knowing who has the authority to approve these actions. See www.afm.ars.usda.gov/divisions/hrd/hrdhomepage/instruct.htm and Section 10. of this handbook for more information regarding requesting and completing the SF-52.
- 5.3. **Complete Position Description.** A complete position description consists of a, "position description," which is a narrative describing the duties of the position and factors used in evaluating those duties and a position description cover sheet (AD-332).
 - A. **Position Description.** The DEO will determine whether a standard position description can be used. Use of the standard (generic) position descriptions which are available for many of the positions covered by these authorities is encouraged. Standard position descriptions can be found on ARS website at: <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/classification/positions/index.htm>. If there is not a standard position description for the duties of a position needed to be filled or if it is a WG position, a draft position description with a cover sheet must be submitted to your servicing specialist for classification and approval.
 - B. **Position Description Cover Sheet (AD-332).** For all positions an AD-332 must be completed and submitted to the servicing specialist. If a standard position description is used, complete an AD-332 (see Appendix C for instructions on completing the AD-332) which will be submitted along with other required documentation to the servicing specialist within three business days of the appointment. However, if a standard position description is not used or if the position is a WG, a draft position description and AD-332 must be submitted to the servicing specialist for approval and processing prior to the appointment.
 1. **Position Number.** The DEO will obtain a valid position number for each position. This will normally be assigned during the ARMPS process, however, if the position is an addition to ARMPS, a position number can be obtained from the servicing specialist. Be sure to explain to the specialist that this is for an L/A or STEP position. An L/A position

number will begin with a “7” and a STEP position number will begin with a “0.” Remember to recycle position numbers. The same numbers can be used from year to year, regardless of the previous position’s classification (i.e., grade, series, title). Once a student position is vacated, it is perfectly acceptable to use that number again.

2. **Supervisor's Certification.** All AD-332's submitted to the servicing specialist **must** be signed and dated by the supervisor of the position certifying that the duties listed are accurately stated.

Section 6 - Recruitment

- 6.1. Locating Applicants.** Locations may recruit informally by contacting local high schools, State Employment offices, business schools, professional and trade associations, groups of individuals whose members would be interested in the positions being filled or a vacancy announcement as outlined below. In many cases the selecting official has already worked with a local college or university, knows whom they wish to select, and will submit their application when the SF-52 is forwarded to the DEO. In this case, the DEO must ensure the applicant meets all eligibility requirements, qualification requirements, and that veteran's preference was appropriately adjudicated as outlined in Sections 7.4. and 8.1. of this handbook.
- 6.2. Vacancy Announcement (Optional).** The use of a vacancy announcement is optional. See Appendixes D and E for sample L/A and STEP vacancy announcements. If a vacancy announcement is not used, information regarding employment opportunities should be distributed to sources such as those listed above that are likely to yield a diverse pool of good candidates.
- A. Required Information.** If using a vacancy announcement, include the following information: title, series, and grade of the vacant position; location of the vacant position; salary; work schedule; vacancy announcement number; opening and closing date of the announcement; area of consideration; a brief summary of the duties of the position; qualifications required; physical requirements of the position if applicable; directions for applying; name and telephone number of a point of contact if an applicant has questions; equal employment opportunity statement; and reasonable accommodation statement.
- B. Open Period.** The announcement should remain open for a reasonable period, e.g., seven calendar days, to assure an adequate supply of qualified applicants. Allow a minimum of 7 days after the closing date for receipt of applications by mail.
- C. Selective Placement Factors.** Any selective placement factors used must be approved by the servicing specialist. Since this would be something that is necessary to perform the duties of the position but cannot be learned within 90 days (e.g., speak another language), selective placement factors will only be used in very rare circumstances for the types and grades of positions filled under L/A and STEP.

Section 7 - Receipt and Review of Applications

- 7.1 What Must Be Done?** DEO must ensure applicants meet all eligibility and qualification requirements, make veteran preference determinations and ensure that veterans' preference is appropriately adjudicated. The DEO must annotate each application with the following information: date received; title, series, and grade of position for which being considered; "eligible" or "ineligible"; qualification standard used; "qualified" or "not qualified"; and veterans' preference group (e.g., "TP 5-pts" or "NV").
- 7.2. Eligibility Requirements.** The DEO is responsible for determining that applicants meet basic eligibility requirements. All eligibility requirements as outlined below must be met before making a candidate an official offer.
- A. Citizenship.** All L/A and STEP appointees must be (1) a citizen of the United States; (2) a citizen of a country the U.S. Congress has specifically exempted from the restricting legislation in the annual Treasury, Postal Service and General Government Appropriations Act; or (3) a national of a country currently allied with the United States in the current defense effort. (**NOTE:** Only servicing specialists have authority to approve non-U.S. citizen appointments).
 - B. Age.** Federal employees have a 16-year minimum age requirement. Additionally, all other Federal, State or local laws and standards regarding employment of minors must be adhered to. Where there is a conflict, the most stringent of the laws and regulations should be applied. This includes abiding by Department of Labor (DOL) regulations in 29 CFR, Part 570 which places restrictions on the employment of those less than 18 years of age. There are also hour and day limitations on employing any youth under age 18. These youths may **not** be employed in a job declared hazardous by the Secretary of Labor. Contact your servicing specialist with questions.
 - C. Employment of Relatives.** A public official may not advocate a relative's appointment, employment, promotion or advancement anywhere in his/her agency or in any agency over which he/she exercises jurisdiction or control. It is not illegal to have two or more members of a family working in the same agency, but one may not supervise a relative, **take a personnel action that affects a relative, or advocate the employment of a relative.** See http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/staffing_recruit/relative.htm for a definition of a relative and more detailed guidance on this subject.
 - D. Suitability.** A candidate's suitability for Federal Employment must be considered during the selection process. The Declaration for Federal Employment (OF-306) provides information needed to make this determination and must be completed prior to making an official offer. Therefore, it is recommended that this form be completed at the time of an interview or as soon as practicable in the selection

process. Based on the information reported in this document and the application, appointees must be found to be reliable, of good character, loyal to the United States, and mentally and physically capable of performing the duties of the position to which appointed without danger to themselves, fellow employees, or the public. If you have any concerns regarding any of these issues or find an applicant's character may be questionable, e.g., other than honorable military discharge, falsification of an application, etc., consult with your servicing specialist before proceeding with the action. **Additionally, if an applicant answers, "yes" to questions 9 through 13 of the OF-306 which deals with convictions, delinquent debts, you must contact your servicing specialist before making a tentative offer.** A blank copy of this form can be found on http://www.opm.gov/Forms/pdf_fill/of0306.pdf.

- E. Selective Service Registration.** Males born after 1959 and at least 18 years of age must be registered with the Selective Service to be considered for employment unless they meet certain exception criteria or get a waiver from OPM (see website <http://www.sss.gov/regist.htm>). Males required to register but do not by their 26th birthday are barred from employment in the executive branch of the federal government. Selective Service Registration information is provided by the applicant on the OF-306 at blocks 7a. through 7c. Information provided can be verified at www.sss.gov/regver/verification1.asp by entering the applicant's name, social security number and date of birth.
- F. Proof of Student Enrollment (STEP Only).** Official documentation must be provided by the appointee verifying they are enrolled or accepted for enrollment at least half-time in a program of study leading to a degree, diploma, or certificate, at an accredited high school, technical or vocational school, 2 or 4 year college or university, graduate, or professional school. Documentation can be verified by contacting the institution. Enrollment must be maintained throughout the length of a STEP appointment, therefore, additional proof of student enrollment can be requested at anytime.
- 1. Half-time Enrollment.** The student must be taking at least a half-time course load. The definition of half-time will vary from one institution to another. If there is any doubt about the adequacy of an applicant's course load, the definition provided by the institution will be applied. An exception is permitted when the individual is in the final period before graduation and needs to complete less than a half-time course load.
 - 2. Acceptable Proof.** Documentation must show the current course load and must be on official school letter head or have a school emblem. Documentation such as a class schedule on plain bond paper or transcripts from prior classes completed are not acceptable.

7.3. **Qualification Requirements**

A. **Qualification Standards.** L/A and STEP appointees must meet qualification requirements but not test requirements as outlined in the OPM Operating Manual for Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions, hereinafter, "Qualification Standards." This manual can be found at www.opm.gov/qualifications/index.htm. Each DEO must read and understand Chapters I, II, and III of this manual; the appropriate qualification standard; and individual occupational requirements if applicable prior to making any qualification determinations. Additionally, it is also highly recommended that each DEO take the USDA Graduate School, Qualification Analysis course. This course is offered as a correspondence course which is fairly inexpensive and requires no travel. If you do not understand or have any questions regarding qualifications, contact your servicing specialist.

1. **Group Coverage Qualification Standards.** Group Coverage Qualification Standards, hereinafter referred to as, "group standards," consist of a statement that describes what positions are covered by that particular standard; a table which shows the minimum education **OR** general **and** specialized experience required to qualify at each grade level; defines educational, general/specialized experience as it relates to the position covered; list examples of how education and experience should be credited; proficiency requirements if applicable; describes use of selective factors for positions covered; and contains a list of occupational series covered (those marked with an asterisk indicates an individual occupational requirements exist for that series). Attached at Appendix B are four group standards frequently used for L/A and STEP appointments: Clerical and Administrative Support Positions, Technical and Medical Support Positions, Administrative and Management Positions, and Professional and Scientific Positions.

2. **Individual Occupational Requirements (IOR).** Individual occupational requirements (IOR) must be used in conjunction with the group standards. It gives additional guidance of how education and experience should be credited for that specific series and may list additional education or experience requirements for that specific series (e.g., for GS-3: Successful completion of 1 year of study that included at least 6 semester hours in any combination of courses such as engineering, engineering or industrial technology, construction, physics, drafting, surveying, physical science, or mathematics.). Attached at Appendix B are four individual occupational requirement standards frequently used for L/A and STEP appointments: GS-404, Biological Science Technician Series; GS-802, Engineering Technician Series; GS-1311, Physical Science Technician Series; and

GS-1316, Hydrologic Technician Series. Since a variety of IOR's exist for many series for which L/A and STEP appointments can be made, the list of series covered by each group standard must be reviewed carefully to ensure specific series is not asterisked.

B. Crediting Education. Detailed instructions on how to qualify applicants based on education can be found in the Qualifications Standards in Chapter II. at the website listed above. Below is some general guidance.

1. Accredited Educational Institutions. Education must be obtained from an institution accredited by the Department of Education. Go to <http://www.ope.ed.gov/accreditation/Search.asp> to verify whether or not an institution is accredited. A list of publications/organizations that can also assist you in verifying accreditation can be found at Appendix G.

2. Academic Year.

a. Undergraduate. At the undergraduate level, successfully completed education that has not led to possession of a degree is credited based on its relationship to 120 semester hours or 180 quarter hours. For example, 30 semester hours or 45 quarter hours are comparable to 1 year of undergraduate education. Four years of progressive study or 120 semester hours meets the degree requirements. Additional credit cannot be given for duplicate course work. If an applicant has attended two or more institutions that use different systems, you may need to covert semester hours to quarter hours or vice versa, whichever you prefer, in order to determine exactly how much education the applicant possesses. In making these determinations, use the chart below and the formulas, table, and examples of converting semester/quarter hours provided at Appendixes H and I.

SEMESTER HOURS	YEARS	QUARTER HOURS
30 semester hours	1	45 quarter hours
60 semester hours	2	90 quarter hours
90 semester hours	3	135 quarter hours
120 semester hours	4	180 quarter hours

- b. **Business or Technical School.** For study at a business or technical school, 36 weeks of study (20+ classroom hours per week) is comparable to 1 academic year above high school.
- c. **Graduate.** An academic year of graduate education is considered to be the number of credit hours that the school attended has determined to represent 1 academic year of full-time study. This determination is made based on the normal course load for a full year of study in the graduate program. If that information cannot be obtained from the school, 18 semester hours or 27 quarter hours should be considered as satisfying the 1 year of full-time study requirement. Part-time graduate education is creditable in accordance with its relationship to a year of full-time study at the school attended.
- d. **Other Terms.** When academic credit is expressed in contract months, units, or other terms that differ from conventional semester or quarter hours, it is the responsibility of the applicant to provide an interpretation of such credits from the appropriate institution in order to equate them to the semester or quarter hours specified in the standard.

C. **Crediting Experience.** Detailed instructions on how to qualify applicants based on experience can be found in the Qualifications Standards in Chapter II. at www.opm.gov/qualifications/index.htm. Below are general guidelines to follow in crediting experience.

- 1. **General/Specialized Experience.** Experience is typically described in a qualification standard as either general or specialized experience.
 - a. **General Experience** is experience that demonstrates the applicant's ability to acquire the particular knowledge and skills needed to perform the duties of the position to be filled. Knowledge of the specific work of the position is not a prerequisite. **"Ability to acquire"** is the key to evaluating general experience.
 - b. **Specialized Experience** is experience that is typically in or related to the work of the position to be filled. Applicants must have demonstrated the ability to perform successfully the duties of the position after a normal orientation period. **"Demonstrate the ability"** is the key to evaluating specialized experience.

When the standard distinguishes between general and specialized experience, general experience cannot be credited for specialized experience. However, specialized experience can be credited as general experience.

Credit for experience is given based on the normal work week and work year for the particular type of employment. Experience that involved less than the normal work week is credited based on the relation it bears to the norm. In most occupations, the normal full-time work week is 35 - 40 hours and the normal work year is 12 months. In evaluating experience, there are various types of creditable experience such as full-time, part-time, concurrent, military and volunteer.

2. **Full-time.** Applicants are considered to have satisfied the requirement for a year of experience for minimum qualification purposes through completion of either 12 months or 52 weeks of creditable work experience, whichever comes first.
3. **Part-time.** Part-time work is prorated in crediting experience. For example, an employee working 20 hours per week for a 12-month period should be credited with 6 months of experience. Time should generally be figured on the basis of hours in a pay status (excluding overtime) rather than scheduled hours in order to recognize the service of part-time employees who frequently are required to work additional straight-time hours. A formula and an example of crediting part-time work are found at Appendix J.
4. **Concurrent.** Concurrent experience is experience in more than one position (does not include overtime in same position) which can be credited as follows:

General Experience - Credit may be given for general experience gained concurrently in more than one position depending on its applicability. If the experience meets the requirements of the standard, credit should be given for the time, excluding overtime, worked in each position. However, credit can be given for only 1 year of experience for any 12-month period. For example, a person who worked full time in each of two clerical positions for over 6 months during a 12-month period, performing duties comparable to the GS-3 level, can only be credited with a year of general clerical experience.

Specialized Experience - Concurrent, straight-time experience in a second position can be credited towards meeting specialized experience requirements only if it contributes significantly to the applicant's possession of the specific KSA's required for the position to be filled. However, credit may be given for only 1 year of qualifying experience for any 12-month period.

5. **Military.** Creditable military service for veterans' preference or that is the basis for restoration to the former civilian position should either be evaluated as an extension of the work the individual was doing immediately before entry into the Armed Forces, or on its merits, whichever is more beneficial to the individual.

In crediting time spent in civilian occupations, military service can be credited either as an extension of the regular employment or of the fill-in employment, whichever is more advantageous to the individual. All military experience evaluated on this basis will be credited at the same level of difficulty and responsibility as the prior civilian experience. If the actual military experience is to be evaluated for credit, it is particularly important that it is evaluated on the basis of the duties performed, rather than on the basis of the military rank of the individual.

6. **Volunteer.** Experience for which the applicant receives no pay is given the same credit as comparable paid experience.

- D. **Crediting a Combination of Education and Experience.** Detailed instructions on how to qualify applicants based on a combination of education and experience can be found in the Qualification Standards Chapter II. at www.opm.gov/qualifications/index.htm. A formula which can be used to determine an applicant's qualifications based on a combination of education and experience is found at Appendix K.

- 7.4. **Veterans' Preference.** In accordance with 5 CFR 302, selecting officials must follow the principles of veteran preference when making L/A and STEP selections. The DEO is responsible for making preference determinations and ensuring preference is appropriately adjudicated. Specific instructions for adjudicating preference are contained in the OPM's *Federal Employment Policy Handbook: Veterans and the Civil Service* (VetGuide) found at <http://www.opm.gov/employ/veterans/html/vetguide.asp>. A Veteran Preference Chart is provided as a supplement to the VetGuide at Appendix L and a sample DD-214 at Appendix M. Basically, each applicant will be identified as one of the following:

CPS 10-pt.	10-point compensable preference based on a service-connected disability of 30% or more; an applicant must submit an *SF-15, Application for 10-Point Veterans Preference plus the documentation required by that form.
CP 10 pt.	10 point compensable preference based on a service-connected disability of 10% or more, but not 30%; an applicant must submit an *SF-15, Application for 10-Point Veterans Preference plus the documentation required by that form.
XP 10 pt.	10-point (other) preference; granted to recipients of the Purple Heart, persons with a non-compensable service-connected disability (less than 10%), widow/widower or mother of a deceased veteran, or spouse or mother of a disabled veteran; an applicant must submit an *SF-15, Application for 10-Point Veterans Preference plus the documentation required by that form.
TP 5 pt.	5-point preference; an applicant must submit a DD-214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty, or other proof of eligibility.
NV	designated a non-veteran.

*A blank SF-15, Application for 10-Point Veteran's Preference form can be found on OPM Standard Forms web site at <http://www.opm.gov/forms/html/sf.asp>.

- 7.5. Applicant Notification.** All applicants should be kept abreast of the status of their application. Applicants that do not meet eligibility or qualification requirements should be notified as soon as practicable.

Section 8 - Referral and Selection.

Applications of candidates meeting all eligibility and qualification requirements should be forwarded to the selecting official.

- 8.1. **Order of Consideration.** Candidates must be considered in the following order of veteran preference priority: CP/CPS, XP, TP, and NV (see Section 7.4. above). Therefore, a NV cannot be selected if an eligible, qualified veteran is available nor can a TP veteran be selected if an XP veteran is available. Please contact your servicing specialist if you have any questions or concerns regarding adjudicating veterans' preference.
- 8.2. **Selection Process.** Allow the supervisor a reasonable period of time to review the applications, interview, and make a selection. Once a selection is made, the DEO will make the official offer, set the effective date and advise as to when to bring the candidate on board.
- 8.3. **Applicant Notification.** The selectee should receive a confirmation letter and all other applicants should be notified of the disposition of their application.

Section 9 - Required Documentation.

It is extremely important that the appropriate documentation is completed correctly and submitted to the servicing specialist within three business days after the effective date of the action. Most forms have instructions on them, be sure instructions are understood and followed.

Below is additional guidance regarding required documentation. Contact your servicing specialist if there are any questions or concerns. It is also a good idea to fax your servicing specialist a copy of the SF-52 or email them so they will know the appointment package is on its way and they can follow up if it is not received timely.

- 9.1. **L/A and STEP Documentation Checklist.** An L/A and STEP Document Checklist can be found at Appendix N. A copy of this form must be completed and sent to your servicing specialist with the other required documentation.
- 9.2. **Request for Personnel Action (SF-52).** A completed SF-52 must be submitted with each appointment action. It must be dated and signed by the DEO certifying that the information is accurate and in compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements. See Section 10. below for more detailed instructions on completing this form. Samples of a completed L/A appointment and STEP appointment SF-52's are found at Appendixes O and P, respectively.
- 9.3. **Application.** As of December 31, 1994, agencies may not require applicants to submit an Application for Federal Employment (SF-171), although they will still be accepted. Applicants now have the option of submitting a resume, curriculum vitae, Optional Application for Federal Employment (OF-612), or any other written format. There is no set format but an application package must evidence the applicant's ability to meet all eligibility and qualification requirements as indicated in this handbook. Go to <http://www.opm.gov/forms/html/of.asp> and scroll down to OF612 for an electronic copy which can be printed.
- 9.4. **Position Description with Signed Cover Sheet (AD-332).** A completed position description and signed cover sheet (AD-332) are required as outlined in Section 5.3. of this handbook. See also Appendix C for instructions on completing.
- 9.5. **Declaration for Federal Employment (OF-306).** Since suitability determinations must be made prior to making a selection, this form must be completed, signed and dated by the applicant in block 17a. at the earliest stage of the selection process (if an interview is conducted, it is recommended you have the candidate complete this form immediately before their interview). See Selective Service Registration and Suitability in Section 7.2.E. above for more important, detailed information regarding these issues. **Additionally, selectees must sign and date block 17b. when they are processed in.** For a blank electronic OF-306 which can be printed, go to http://www.opm.gov/Forms/pdf_fill/of0306.pdf.

- 9.6. **Appointment Affidavit (SF-61).** Must be completed for initial appointments. The form is signed by the appointee, and also signed and dated by the agency representative. Please note: the appointee must literally raise their right-hand and repeat the oath of office in front of someone with the appropriate authority.
- 9.7. **Employee Eligibility Verification (I-9).** Must be completed for each appointment. The directions on the form should be followed carefully. Identification used for US citizens should **not** be copied and sent to the servicing specialist.
- 9.8. **Race and National Origin Identification (SF-181).** This form must be provided to each appointee during in processing; however, it is the appointee's discretion whether or not they complete and submit it. If the appointee is provided the form but chooses not to submit it, that fact must be conveyed to the servicing specialist by checking the appropriate block on the LA/and STEP Document Checklist and a category code (e.g., "A" to indicate American Indian or Alaskan Native, "B" to indicate Asian or Pacific Islander, etc.) provided based on visual perception.
- 9.9. **Self Identification of Medical Disability (SF-256).** This form must be provided to each appointee during in processing; however, it is the appointee's discretion whether or not they complete and submit it. If the appointee is provided the form and chooses not to submit it, that fact must be conveyed to the servicing specialist by checking the appropriate block on the L/A and STEP Document Checklist.
- 9.10. **Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate (W-4).** Each appointee must complete an Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate (W-4) so the agency can withhold the correct Federal income tax from their pay.
- 9.11. **Federal, State and Local Tax Forms.** The DEO is responsible for knowing what Federal, state and local tax forms are required. Your servicing specialist can help you determine what state and local tax forms are required.
- 9.12. **Employee Address (AD-349).** This form must be completed and signed by each appointee.
- 9.13. **Direct Deposit (SF-1199A) OR Fast Start Direct Deposit (Form 2231).** Each appointee should complete a direct deposit form. Your servicing specialist can help you determine which form is appropriate for you to use.
- 9.14. **Work Permit.** If the appointee is a minor, a work permit may be required. Your servicing specialist can help you determine if a work permit is required. A sample of a completed Maryland work permit is at Appendix W.
- 9.15. **Designation of Beneficiary (SF-1152).** Each appointee must be provided this form. They should be asked to read the Order of Precedence listed on the form. If they agree with it, they do not need to complete it **or** they can complete it and write, "Agree with Order of Precedence" where space is provided to list beneficiaries. If they do not agree with the Order of Precedence, they should complete the form per the instructions.

- 9.16. Conditions of Employment for Letter of Authorization (L/A) Appointments OR Statement of Understanding Student Temporary Employment Program.** Each L/A appointee must read, sign, and date a Conditions of Employment for Letter of Authorization (L/A) Appointments which also must also be signed and dated by the agency representative and each STEP appointee must read, sign, and date a Statement of Understanding Student Temporary Employment Program. A blank Conditions of Employment for Letter of Authorization (L/A) Appointments and Statement of Understanding Student Temporary Employment Program are at Appendixes Q and R, respectively.
- 9.17. Proof of Student Enrollment (STEP Only).** Official proof of student enrollment must be submitted with each STEP appointment. See Section 7.2.F. above for more detailed information regarding specific requirements. A sample proof of student enrollment is found at Appendix S.
- 9.18. Proof of Education.** If selectee qualifies based on education or the position has a positive education requirement, an official transcript or a statement from the institution's registrar, dean, or other appropriate official is required. The original transcript or statement is needed; however a copy may be accepted if an agency representative (LAO, servicing specialist, etc.) makes the copy of the original and certifies they saw the original. A sample of an official transcript is at Appendix T.
- 9.19. Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty (DD-214).** Each appointee claiming veterans' preference must provide a copy of their DD-214 which verifies eligibility. See Veterans' Preference section above. A sample DD-214 is found at Appendix M.
- 9.20. Application for 10-Point Veteran's Preference (SF-15).** Each appointee claiming 10-point veteran's preference must provide a copy of an SF-15 plus the documentation required by that form to verify their eligibility for preference claimed. A blank SF-15 can be found on OPM Standard Forms web site at <http://www.opm.gov/forms/html/sf.asp>.
- 9.21. Certification of Typing Proficiency.** For all STEP appointments occupying positions that have a minimum typing proficiency requirement pursuant to the appropriate qualification standard, applicants must document typing speed on their application by attaching a copy of performance test results, a certificate of proficiency from an OPM authorized office, or through self-certification on their application.
- 9.22. NACI Paperwork.** NACI stands for National Agency Check & Inquiry which is a background investigation that is completed on all government employees who are placed in a Low Risk, Nonsensitive position for more than an aggregate of 180 days in either a single continuous appointment or a series of appointments. Check with your servicing specialist for specific paperwork requirements. All positions designated as Moderate Risk Public Trust (i.e., work in a Biosafety Level 3 facility), require preemployment Special Agency Check before EOD.

Section 10 - Instructions for Completing a Request for Personnel Action (SF-52) for L/A and STEP Appointments.

An SF-52 must be completed or “coded” for each L/A and STEP appointment in accordance with OPM’s Guide to Processing Personnel Actions, Chapter 4. Requesting and Documenting Personnel Actions which is found at www.opm.gov/feddata/gppa/gppa.htm. General information is provided in the beginning of this chapter and detailed instructions for completing the SF-52 block by block starts at page 4-41, Job Aid Instructions for Completing Parts A, B, and D of the SF-52. DEO's should review these instructions and understand how they apply to actions they are approving. Additionally, all codes for Part B. of the SF-52 are found in the Guide to Personnel Data Standards which gives an explanation of what information is in each block, a list of codes that can be used, and a description of each code. Listed below are most codes needed to complete Part B. for L/A and STEP appointments, however, DEO's may need to refer to the Guide to Personnel Data Standards which is located at www.opm.gov/feddata/guidance.htm when coding actions. Samples of a completed SF-52's for an L/A appointment and a STEP appointment are found at Appendixes O and P, respectively. Contact your service specialist if you have any questions.

Part A., Block 1. Identifies action requested which will be, “L/A Appointment” OR “STEP Appointment.” Completed by requesting office; however, they may need to consult with the DEO to determine which authority is appropriate.

Part A., Block 2. Identifies request number consisting of the last two digits of the fiscal year, dash, four digit fourth level organizational structure code, dash, four digit sequential numerical code (e.g., 02-6453-0001).

Part A., Block 3. Identifies name and telephone number of a person to contact if additional information is needed.

Part A., Block 4. (Optional). Identifies a proposed effective date.

Part A., Block 5. Contains the name, title, signature and date signed of person requesting the action.

Part A., Block 6. Contains the name, title, signature, date signed which verifies their concurrence of a person authorized to approve action. The DEO is responsible for knowing who has the authority to approve L/A and STEP appointments.

Part B., Block 1. Identifies last, first and middle name of the appointee. This should be the appointee's official name as it appears on their application and used for official documents such as social security records, driver's license, etc.

Part B., Block 2. Identifies appointee's social security. DEO must verify appointee's social

security number against application/resume or other official documentation.

Part B., Block 3. Identifies appointee's date of birth, entered as month-day-year order. DEO must verify this date against application/resume or other official documentation.

Part B., Block 4. Identifies the effective date of the action. Enter date in month-day-year order.

If at all possible, L/A and STEP appointments should be effective the first day of a pay period (Sunday). If the first Monday of the pay period is a holiday and the employee is on a full-time or part-time work schedule and scheduled to work the holiday Monday, the effective date of the action should still be the first day of the pay period (Sunday) and the employee would be entitled to the holiday pay. Likewise, if the employee is on a part-time schedule but not scheduled to work the holiday Monday, e.g., scheduled to work on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, the effective date should still be the first day of the pay period (Sunday), however, the employee would not be paid for the holiday since they were not scheduled to work that day. Keep in mind, if for any reason the effective date of an appointment action is after the first Monday of the pay period, the employee would not be entitled to earn leave that pay period.

Part B., Block 5-A. Identifies nature of action code which is a three digit numerical number. For L/A and STEP appointments that DEO's are authorized to approve, this code will be 171.

Part B., Block 5-B. Identifies the nature of action. For L/A and STEP appointments this will be, "Exc Appt NTE" and the not-to-exceed date (e.g., 07-13-02) which will vary as explained below but this date can never exceed one year from the effective date of the action. For L/A appointments the number of workdays they are scheduled to work (e.g., 130) should be counted out on a calendar to determine the not-to-exceed date (e.g., the appointee's work schedule is Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, using a calendar begin counting scheduled workdays: the first Tuesday as 1, first Wednesday as 2, first Thursday as 3, second Tuesday as 4, second Wednesday as 5, second, Thursday as 6, etc. when you get to the desired number of days, that will be your not-to-exceed date). For STEP appointments the not-to-exceed date will be the date the student's services will no longer be needed, one year from the effective date, or the date the student graduates whichever is sooner. Keep in mind that students are only eligible for a STEP appointment while they are in school and once they graduate they are no longer eligible, therefore, if they will graduate within the year, the not-to-exceed date should not be later than their expected graduation date.

Part B., Block 5-C. Identifies legal authority code which is a three digit alpha/numerical code. For all L/A appointments this code will be XZM. For all STEP appointments, this code will depend on what type of degree program the student is working toward, therefore, use the list below.

- Y1K for high school diploma program
- Y2K for post-high school certificate program (e.g., a vocational or technical certificate program)
- Y3K for associate degree program
- Y4K for baccalaureate degree program
- Y5K for graduate degree or professional degree program

Part B., Block 5-D. Identifies legal authority. For all L/A appointments this legal authority will be Sch A 213.3113(a)(5). For all STEP appointments this legal authority will be Sch B 213.3202(a) **plus** add the following:

HS	for high school diploma program
Voc/Tech	for post-high school certificate program
Assoc	for associate degree program
BA/BS	for baccalaureate degree program
Grad/Prof	for graduate degree or professional degree program.

Part B., Blocks 5.-E. Through 14. Leave blank.

Part B., Block 15. Identifies position official title and five digit position description number. This information is found on the AD-332, Block 4. See also, Section 5.3.B.

Part B., Block 16. Identifies pay plan which will always be “GS” since DEO’s do not have authority to approve actions for other pay plans.

Part B., Block 17. Identifies occupational code of the position which is a four digit numerical number. This information is found on the Position Description Cover Sheet (AD-332), Block 12.

Part B., Block 18. Identifies the grade of the position which is a two digit numerical number. This information is found on the Position Description Cover Sheet (AD-332), Block 14.

Part B., Block 19. Identifies the step which will always be, “01” unless the appointee had prior Federal experience that could be used to place the appointee in a higher grade. If this is the situation, please consult your servicing specialist to ensure the appointee is placed in the appropriate step.

Part B., Blocks 20A., 20B., and 20C. Identifies basic pay, locality pay, and adjusted basic pay.

Part B., Block 21. Identifies pay basis. Per the Guide to Data Element Standards enter PA if the salary in Block 20C. is per annum/yearly or PH if the salary in Block 20C. is per hour.

Part B., Block 22. Identifies names and location of position’s organization. Additionally, the 18 digit organizational structure code (e.g., 03 30 36 3620 70 00 00 00) is listed at the bottom of this block.

Part B., Block 23. Identifies veterans preference code. This code identifies an employee's entitlement to preference at the time of appointment in the Federal service based on active military service that terminated honorably. Below is a list of codes. See the Guide to Data Element Standards for description of each code. See also Veteran Preference, Section 7.4. above

- 1 None.
- 2 5-point.
- 3 10-point/disability.
- 4 10-point/compensable.
- 5 10-point/other.
- 6 10-point/compensable/30 percent.

Part B., Block 24. Tenure code. For purposed of reduction in force, this is the tenure group for which the employee will be placed based on employee's type of appointment. All L/A and STEP appointees are tenure code, "0."

Part B., Block 25. Leave blank.

Part B., Block 26. Veterans Preference for RIF code. This code indicates whether or not the employee would be eligible for veterans' preference in a reduction in force. Place an, "X" in the block in front of the word, "NO."

Part B., Block 27. Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) code. This code indicates an employee's coverage or noncoverage under FEGLI Program. All L/A and STEP appointees are code, "A0" which indicates they are ineligible to participate in this program.

Part B., Block 28. Annuitant indicator code. This code identifies the status of an annuitant appointed to a position in the Federal civilian service. Appointees are code, "9" unless they are retired from Federal or military service. If the appointee checked, "yes" to Block 14 of the OF-306, consult your servicing specialist to determine appropriate code.

Part B., Block 29. Pay rate determinant code. This code identifies any special factors that help determine an employee's rate of basic pay or adjusted basic pay. The pay rate determinant will be "0" unless the appointee's pay is being adjusted (e.g., special rate, superior qualifications, etc.). See the Guide to Data Standards for a list of all codes and an explanation of each.

Part B., Block 30. Retirement plan code. This code identifies the civilian retirement system(s) to which deductions from an employee's pay are credited. All L/A and STEP appointees you are approving will be coded as, "2" which indicates they are under the Social Security System (FICA).

Part B., Block 31. Identifies service computation date for leave which is entered as month-day-year. This will always be the effective date of the appointment action unless the appointee had previous creditable service. Contact your servicing specialist if you have any questions.

Part B., Block 32. Identifies work schedule code. This describes the time basis the employee is scheduled to work. Below are work schedules most likely used for L/A and STEP appointments. See the Guide to Personnel Data Standards for the entire list of available codes or for more detailed information regarding these codes:

F	Full-time
P	Part-time
I	Intermittent

Part B., Block 33. If the appointee is on a part-time work schedule, enter number of hours the appointee will be scheduled to work in a biweekly pay period (e.g., appointee will work 20 hours per week, enter 40). If the appointee is not on a part-time work schedule, leave blank.

Part B., Block 34. Identifies whether position occupied is in the Competitive Service, Excepted Service or Senior Executive Service. This block will always be “2” for L/A and STEP appointments which indicates that the position is in the Excepted Service.

Part B., Block 35. Identifies which category under the Fair Labor Standards Act the position is classified. Position covered by this handbook will be “N” indicating that the position is not exempt for the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Part B., Block 36. Identifies appropriation code.

Part B., Block 37. Identifies bargaining unit status code. This is a four digit numerical code. See Appendix V for instructions on completing this block and a list of codes.

Part B., Block 38. Identifies duty station code. This is a nine digit numerical code (e.g., 05 0480 083).

Part B., Block 39. Identifies duty station. Enter the city, county, and state or overseas location as listed in the Guide to Personnel Data Standards.

Part B., Blocks 40. Through 48. Leave blank. Blocks 45., 46., and 47. are not required to be completed on appointments in the excepted service, tenure group 0.

Part B., Block 49. Identifies citizenship code. Insert “1” if the employee is a United States citizen/United States National. Note: Only servicing specialists have authority to approve non-U.S. citizen appointments.

Part B., Block 50. Identifies veterans status code. This code indicates whether an employee is a veteran as defined by 38 U.S.C. 101 (i.e., a person who served in the active uniformed military service of the United States and who was discharged or released from service under conditions other than dishonorable). Below are codes and brief description of each code used for L/A and STEP appointments. See the Guide to Personnel Data Standards for a more detailed information.

- X Not a veteran and appointment is after September 30, 1991.
- V Vietnam-era veteran. A veteran who served any time during the Vietnam era -- from August 5, 1964 through May 7, 1975.
- B Pre-Vietnam-era veteran. A veteran whose service ended before the Vietnam era -- before August 5, 1964 and came onto the agency's rolls was after September 30, 1991.
- P Post-Vietnam-era veteran. A veteran whose service began after the Vietnam era -- after May 7, 1975 and came on the agency's rolls after September 30, 1991.

Part B., Block 51. Identifies supervisory status code. This code indicates the nature of managerial, supervisory, or non-supervisory responsibility assigned to an employee's position. L/A and STEP appointees are coded as, "8" which indicates the position does not meet the definition of manager, management official, supervisor, team leader, or leader.

Part C., Block 1. Leave blank.

Part C., 2. The DEO must sign and date this block to certify that the information entered on this form is accurate and that the proposed action is in compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements. **NOTE: Must be signed and dated prior to the effective date of the action.**

Part D. and Part E. Leave blank.

Part F. Remarks for SF-50. In the Guide to Processing Personnel Actions, OPM establishes standard remark codes which are required for certain personnel actions. Most remarks appear on the Notification of Personnel Action (SF-50) and provide employees with important information. The following remark codes are required as follows. See the chart on the next page for an explanation of each remark code:

L/A - A11, B03, B04 if intermittent, M01, M06, M10, M39, M40

STEP - A30, B52 or B04 if intermittent, M01, M06, M10, M39, M40

REMARK CODES FOR L/A AND STEP APPOINTMENTS

Remark Code	Information Required	Explanation of Remark	How the Remark Appears on the SF-50	Required for . . .
A11 Number of Days		Notifies the employee the number of work days in a year that this appointment must not exceed.	Employment under this appointment must not exceed __ working days a year.	LA
A30		Notifies the employee that this appointment does not give the employee the right to be converted to a career-conditional or career appointment noncompetitively.	This appointment does not confer eligibility to be noncompetitively converted to career-conditional or career appointment.	STEP
B03		Notifies the employee that this appointment does not entitle the employee to health benefits.	Ineligible for Health Benefits.	LA
B04		Used when an employee is on intermittent work schedule and notifies the employee that they are not eligible to earn annual leave.	Ineligible for leave.	LA and STEP
B52		Do not use this remark code if a person is on an intermittent work schedule.	Ineligible for health benefits until you complete 1 year of continuous employment. Then you may elect health benefits for which you will be charged the full premium.	STEP
M01 Date		The date that the employee signed the Appointment Affidavit.	Appointment affidavit executed __.	LA and STEP
M06 Reason for temporary appointment		Explains the reason for temporary appointment.	Reason for temporary appointment: L/A appointment to provide research support. OR Reason for temporary appointment: Appointment to provide research support.	LA and STEP
M10 Address		Used when the employee's Official Personnel Folder (OPF) is NOT located at the same location the employee is assigned, letting the employee know where the OPF is maintained.	OPF maintained by: USDA/ARS/HRD, 5601 Sunnyside Ave, Beltsville, MD 20705-5103	LA and STEP

REMARK CODES FOR L/A AND STEP APPOINTMENTS (continued)

Remark Code	Information Required	Explanation of Remark	How the Remark Appears on the SF-50	Required for . . .
M39 __ yrs, __ mos OR none		Used to identify the total number of years and months of military service creditable for leave accrual purposes. For employees who have not creditable military service, enter "none". Employees who do have creditable military service, enter in yrs and mos, e.g., "6 yrs, 7 mos". Check with your servicing specialist if you have questions.	Creditable Military Service __ yrs. __ mos.	LA and STEP
M40 Never covered OR Previously covered		Used to identify whether an employee has, at the time of the most recent appointment to Federal service, previously been covered by the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) or the Federal Employees' Retirement System (FERS).	Previous Retirement Coverage: Never covered OR Previous Retirement Coverage: Previously covered	LA and STEP